CONSTRUCTING RELATIONAL URBANISM: URBAN POLICY MOBILITY AND THE ROLE OF CONFERENCE SPACE
“You get people working in isolation all over the country... and then they come to this environment where they get a lot of support... and you begin to build a sense of solidarity to exchange information, resources, pick up new ideas. It’s really about skills transfer and it’s the people that go to it.”

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“And we can support the health department. So we can help move that dialogue forward for them, and it leaves a legacy that it’s something that’s improved in Portland.”
HARM REDUCTION

“policies, programmes and practices that aim primarily to reduce the adverse health, social and economic consequences of the use of legal and illegal psychoactive drugs without necessarily reducing drug consumption”
- Harm Reduction International 2012
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CONFERENCES ARE...

**CONVERGENCE SPACE**

Socially reproduce advocacy movements.
Create & mobilize knowledge.
Facilitate meetings and strengthen relationships among people.

**URBAN**

There is an urban politics and economics to the placing of conferences.
Cities are implicated in the production of social movements, and policy mobilization.
URBAN POLICY MOBILITIES

Critiques traditional policy transfer literature as:

- narrow conceptualization of policy actors
- flat notions of policy transfer

Sees cities as relational

Highlights the tensions between policy as always in motion and also territorialized

- Policy as ‘picked up,’ ‘picked apart,’ and ‘placed’ through networks of policy actors operating in relation to local and wider political processes.

‘Tracing’ and ‘following’ policy processes across space

Policies as part of making up / assembling the city
**CONFERENCES AS ‘CONVERGENCE SPACE’**

Convergence space: “a dynamic system constructed out of a complexity of interrelations and interactions across all spatial scales.” (Routeledge 2003, 346)

Temporally limited, yet lasting effects

Urban in nature

“The city is a generative space of mobilizations ... the frontline where states constantly create new governmental methods... These techniques combine in different ways... making cities not only prime sites for contentious innovation but also the places where new ways of regulating, ordering and controlling social life are invented.” (Uitermark et al 2012, 2)
“INSTITUTIONS, ORGANIZATIONS, AND TECHNOLOGIES THAT FRAME AND PACKAGE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT BEST POLICY PRACTICES, SUCCESSFUL CITIES, AND CUTTING EDGE IDEAS FOR SPECIFIC AUDIENCES” (TEMENOS & MCCANN, FORTHCOMING)

**States**

All scales

State actors (politicians, bureaucrats, etc)

State power of implementation

Legitimacy

**Educators**

Educators & trainers formally educating policy actors

Legitimation/certification practices

Power to frame knowledge

**Media**

Repetition of narratives

Frame policies, actors, cities as ‘good’/’bad’

**Professional & activist organizations**

Frame, value, facilitate transfer of policy knowledge

Mobilize through: publications, websites, site visits, conferences
“Time limited events that bring people together from particular epistemic communities for face-to-face interaction and exchange of verbal, visual and symbolic information.” (Cook & Ward 2012)
“first we went to Oakland and there were thousands of people. Then we thought let’s go to Cleveland – they have a needle exchange that’s in trouble, let go there. Well, no one came! Who wants to go to Cleveland? So we had like 700 people there. So we weren’t building on what we had started in Oakland. So we thought ok well we have to go to locations that people like. No help in Miami for local people, but there were tonnes of people there, because they loved Miami. Portland is somewhere where we have a lot of support from the health department, they’re really invested... so it’s a place that people want to go to because its trendy, Portlandia, you know?”
“And we can support the health department. So we can help move that dialogue forward for them, and it leaves a legacy that it’s something that’s improved in Portland.”
“Well you know, that [decision] was interesting, but we always try and go where there’s conflict, so we can raise the profile locally... this year its Marseilles. If the French government sees all these people coming to their cities... well, that’s a good thing. If they’re seen as being a leader in this, well it only helps the mayor.”
“That’s why we had it at the uni[versity], because people with records – people who live on the street – they don’t want to walk into a conference hall. ‘Spruce room, what the fuck is Spruce room?’ They’re not going to ask a security guard for directions. Campus – well there’s still barriers and all, but at least it’s a public space – supposedly... so it makes it better for them, you know?”

“They were always picking islands off of islands, you couldn’t get there! Forget scholarships! And who can afford it? They had one token drug user.”
CONFERENCES ARE...

CONVERGENCE SPACE

Important for social reproduction of advocacy movements via production and dissemination of knowledge, and encounters that contribute to creating and strengthening relationships among people.

URBAN

There is a politics and economics to the placing of conferences, which implicate cities in the production of social movements, and policy mobilization.